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# A STUDY OF TEMPERAMENTS AS ILLUSTRATED IN LITERATURE<sup>1</sup>

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## I

### LITERATURE AS A CRITERION OF LIFE

In one way, that of the analysis and portrayal of temperament, good literature may be regarded as a fair criterion of conditions in real life; in fact, literature *is* good only when it seems, to discriminating judgments, to present humanity and its relations in a worthy and truthful manner. Matthew Arnold's statement that literature is a criticism of life will usually hold true.

Nevertheless, in the matter of the relative proportions of the various temperaments, the study of fiction and the drama tends to be somewhat misleading. As a usual thing, it is only the "interesting" types that the author cares, or, perhaps, dares, to use. The active, the gay, the romantic, the emotional—concerning these, he may feel sure, the reader ardently desires to be informed; the dull, the apathetic, the morose, the timid, the weak, or the merely ordinary, the author is perfectly aware, appeal to the public but little. These latter characters, then, he uses sparingly, or in an accessory way, as foils for the strong, animated and attractive, or as sources of annoyance to the injured innocent. Villains have always been in favor, provided that they were shrewd and vigorous enough, but the commonplace, well-meaning persons, the flabby and characterless, have been but slightly recognized in literature. This tends to be less and less the case, as humanitarianism increases, and the personality of the individual occupies a larger place in the minds of men. In other words, modern realism introduces into literature many characters which would formerly have been deemed unworthy of consideration. Modern fiction is, in this sense, a better standard of judgment in the matter of temperaments than those phases of character-portrayal which have preceded it. Yet it must be admitted, that while good literature describes and analyzes human characters with accu-

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racy and fidelity, it forms an extremely unsuitable means by which to estimate the proportions in which the various temperaments appear in the civilized world.

## II

### RIBOT'S CLASSIFICATION OF CHARACTERS

This attempt to classify, on the basis of individual differences, some of the well-known characters of fiction is founded rather largely upon Ribot's discussion of normal characters in chapter 12 (Part II) of "The Psychology of the Emotions." Some modification of that scheme has, however, been deemed expedient. It will be remembered by those who are familiar with the chapter in question, that Ribot prepares the way for his classification by excluding from the catalogue of "true characters" the amorphous, or characterless; and the unstable, or vacillating. He then indicates "four degrees, of increasing definiteness and diminishing generality." Within the first of these, which is the most extensive and general (almost purely theoretical, in fact), he makes two great groups of characters: 1. The Active. 2. The Sensitive. After this twofold division, he is forced to admit the necessity for a third, which shall include those characters that are low both in feeling and in the impulses to action. This gives us: 3. The Apathetic. In the second degree come "the fundamental types of character," not merely theoretical, like those in the first degree, "but real, justified and verified by observation." In the third degree are the mixed or composite characters—those made up of elements from the three large groups. Here we find the sensitive-active, the apathetic-active, the apathetic-sensitive, the temperate or balanced (if there are any such, which Ribot appears to doubt). The fourth degree includes the "partial characters" for which we are given the formula: "Amorphousness, *plus* an intellectual disposition, or a well-marked affective tendency."<sup>1</sup>

Without indulging in any extended commentary on this scheme, which in the main seems reasonable, one may be allowed an expression of concurrence with the criticism of it that Malapert makes in his "Les Elements du Caractère." "It [the classification of Ribot] sins by default. It excludes too much." Have we the right to exclude the amorphous and the unstable on the ground that they are not real characters? They have a certain claim, by reason of their very peculiarities.

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<sup>1</sup> This outline does not, of course, pretend to any classification of abnormal, or morbid characters, which are, according to Ribot, to be distinguished by means of his test of "unity and stability," and which he treats at some length in chapter 13.

Belonging to numerous reasonably normal human beings, they must constitute characters of some sort, just as a very ill-developed brain is nevertheless a brain. They seem, psychologically considered, to be as worthy as any other types; for as Malapert very wisely remarks, "Is character more than the moral physiognomy of the individual?"

In this paper, the more important character divisions, indicated by Ribot, have been adhered to, with, however, little effort to preserve a rigid observation of the "four degrees." The catalogue of "real" characters has been enlarged, to contain the amorphous, the unstable, and the temperate, or balanced character which Ribot regards somewhat doubtfully.

### III

#### THE ACTIVE TEMPERAMENT

"The active," says Ribot, "have as their dominant characteristic a natural and continually renewed tendency to action. . . . Their life is mostly directed outwards. . . . They are optimists, because they feel strong enough to struggle with obstacles, and overcome them, and take pleasure in the struggle."

We need not search long in literature for examples of the mediocre and higher forms of the active temperament. D'Artagnan in "The Three Musketeers" of Dumas, serves admirably as an illustration of this type. His first adventures at the Court of Louis XIII are startlingly strenuous; the most noteworthy being the encounter with the Cardinal's guards. In this affray, D'Artagnan conducts himself with astonishing audacity and courage, finishing with his own hand an incredible number of experienced swordsmen. After this, duels, skirmishes, and bloody battles follow with appalling rapidity. The young Gascon no more than walks out for his dinner but he feels called upon to thrust his sword through a half-dozen ferocious enemies, of whom the supply never seems to grow less, despite his amazing achievements. There is no time for the hero to think, meditate, develop fine, differentiated emotions; no time for the author to describe them, if they existed. All is action, sword-thrusting, blood-letting, "swashbuckling." The feelings that play upon the surface of this exciting succession of events are the primitive ones—fear, courage, jealousy, hate, ambition, rude affection,—all in their simplest, least complicated form. The prime motive in the hearts of D'Artagnan and his daring companions is clearly the zest of life, the fine fervor of over-abundant spirits, the unbridled love of action, movement, excitement, and adventure.

Of the same enterprising, headlong, life-loving type are all

the heroes, little and big, of the usual historical novel; often, also, of the historical play. Witness Prince Hal, and Hotspur, two vigorous and lusty soldiers, joying in wild life, opposition, struggle, the battlefield. The Prince, who has a generous and very real comprehension of the character of his rival, thus sums up the passionate activity of Harry Percy: "I am not yet of Percy's mind, the Hotspur of the North; he that kills me some six or seven dozen of Scots at a breakfast, washes his hands, and says to his wife, 'Fie upon this quiet life! I want work!' 'O, my sweet Harry,' says she, 'how many hast thou killed to-day?' 'Give my roan horse a drench,' says he, and answers, 'Some fourteen . . . a trifle, a trifle!'" (Henry IV, Part I, Act II, Scene IV.)

We might go through a long list of such knights of the sword and pistol: Quentin Durward,<sup>1</sup> Barry Lyndon,<sup>2</sup> Front de Boeuf,<sup>3</sup> Ivanhoe,<sup>4</sup> St. Ives,<sup>5</sup> David Balfour,<sup>6</sup> Henry Esmond,<sup>7</sup> Richard Carvel,<sup>8</sup> Hugh Wynne,<sup>9</sup> and a thousand others, as well known, or now fallen into literary obscurity. Some have more of one characteristic, some of another; some are merely roystering dare-devils, some polished diplomats and gentlemen; but all are first and foremost distinguished by the love of action, the irrepressible desire for novelty and adventure, that leads them into and safely through the most prodigious and perilous of exploits.

The great-active temperament is that of the ordinary active, but more single-minded, more powerful, more exalted. In this class we must put all the epic heroes, and all great leaders of men, and makers of history, as they appear in literature worthy of their prowess. Hector,<sup>10</sup> Achilles<sup>11</sup>, Odysseus,<sup>12</sup> Æneas,<sup>13</sup> Roland,<sup>14</sup> Siegfried,<sup>15</sup> Sigurd,<sup>16</sup> Arthur,<sup>17</sup> Beowulf,<sup>18</sup> the Cid,<sup>19</sup> and the Satan of Paradise Lost,<sup>20</sup> are all great actives. Hamilcar,<sup>21</sup> Cæsar,<sup>22</sup> Richard the Lion Heart,<sup>23</sup> William Tell,<sup>24</sup> and other such personal forces, may go in the same category. The great-active, though it may stoop to little things, has its vision on something far beyond the commonplace rewards of life—on the conquering or the restoration of a people, a nation, or a world. It is purposeful, vigorous, dauntless, and often (in the books), superhuman. It may

<sup>1</sup> Quentin Durward: Scott. <sup>2</sup> Barry Lyndon: Thackeray. <sup>3</sup> and <sup>4</sup> Ivanhoe: Scott. <sup>5</sup> St. Ives: R. L. Stevenson. <sup>6</sup> David Balfour: R. L. Stevenson. <sup>7</sup> Henry Esmond: Thackeray. <sup>8</sup> Richard Carvel: Winston Churchill. <sup>9</sup> Hugh Wynne: F. Wier Mitchell.

<sup>10</sup> - <sup>11</sup> The Iliad: Homer. <sup>12</sup> The Odyssey: Homer. <sup>13</sup> The Æneid: Virgil. <sup>14</sup> Chanson de Roland. <sup>15</sup> Nibelungen Lied. <sup>16</sup> Sigurd the Volsung: Wm. Morris. <sup>17</sup> Arthurian Legends. <sup>18</sup> Beowulf (the Anglo-Saxon Epic). <sup>19</sup> The Cid (the Spanish Epic). <sup>20</sup> Paradise Lost: Milton. <sup>21</sup> Salammbô: G. Flaubert. <sup>22</sup> Julius Cæsar: Shakespeare. <sup>23</sup> The Talisman: Scott. <sup>24</sup> Wilhelm Tell: Schiller.

itself be conquered, and even suffer death, but in the largest sense it is never really defeated; it transcends all that mere earthly strength can bring to pass. It is human possibility raised to the  $n^{\text{th}}$  power, and, in the older literatures, at least, embodies the ideal man approaching the potency and omniscience of the gods.

It will be noted that, so far in the discussion of the active type, only the names of men have been given. Are there, then, no active women, either in literature or in life? Doubtless there are more in real life than in the realms of fiction; yet it would be difficult to imagine a woman of the dominantly active temperament, such as D'Artagnan, or Henry Esmond, is seen to possess. The conventionalities have too firm a hold upon the sex, for one thing, and a women's nature is too inherently emotional, for another. Even though she may, by taste or necessity, be distinctly active, in whatever polite way is permitted, she is bound to be dominated by her feelings. The woman who is the exception to this rule, though she may be a valuable member of society, is not usually attractive and romantic enough to be made the heroine of a novel. She may take the place of a subordinate character, but that is all. Tom Grogan, in the book of that name by Hopkinson Smith, is a woman who leads an active, masculine life—but yet a woman. Priscilla Lammeter<sup>1</sup> and Betsy Trotwood<sup>2</sup> might be spoken of as active women, yet they are consigned to the position of inferior, half-humorous characters in the books in which they appear. The dearth of purely active feminine types in literature is significant of several things: First:—That the emotional or emotionally active women are the only ones really interesting to the average, or even the intelligent reader. Second:—That the usual masculine writer (and up to a few years ago, practically all writers were masculine) sees woman only as an emotional subject, because he regards all women as different, in mental constitution, from his own sex. Third:—That the usual feminine writer sees woman only as an emotional subject, since she knows all or nearly all, women to be like herself. Fourth:—That women are, actually, by birth and training, emotional and not pre-eminently active.

Thus it is easy to see why, though there are plenty of sensitive-active women in literature (as will be shown later), there is an extremely small number in whom activity may be said to dominate.

#### IV

##### THE SENSITIVE TEMPERAMENT

Within the genus of the sensitive, Ribot distinguishes three species: The humble; the contemplative; the emotional.

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<sup>1</sup> Silas Marner: G. Eliot. <sup>2</sup> David Copperfield: C. Dickens.

The first of these, the humble, is characterized by "excessive sensibility, moderate intelligence, and little or no energy." Such a personality is rarely found in fiction; it is difficult to handle, and does not attract the author whose chief purpose is to please his readers. It is to the work of a Balzac that we instinctively turn, to find an example of such a character as the sensitive-humble, disregarded by the generality of literary men. "Cousin Pons" meets the requirements precisely. Pons is a bachelor, somewhat advanced in years, a musician and a collector of rare and beautiful objects, for which he spends the greater part of his scanty income. He has, the author tells us, "a great soul, a sensitive nature."

"The sense of beauty which he had kept pure and living in his inmost soul, was the spring from which the delicate, graceful and ingenious music flowed, and won him reputation." "A masterpiece finely rendered, brought tears to his eyes."

This "tender, dreamy and sensitive soul" is condemned to loneliness. The few relatives whom Pons can claim are stolid or malicious creatures, incapable of any understanding of the gentle bachelor's nature. "He had," says Balzac, "suffered acutely among them, but like all timid creatures, he kept silence as to his pain; and so by degrees, schooled himself to hide his feelings, and learned to take sanctuary in his inmost self." "Who will ever paint all that the timid suffer?"

The wretchedness which even trifles could cause him is compared to the irritation of some harsh substance on a delicate membrane. "Invisible grains of sand sank perpetually into the fibres of (his) being, causing . . . intolerable anguish of heart."

On the occasion of a visit paid by the old man to his stupid and mercenary cousin, "Pons suffered from the inexplicable emotions which torment clear consciences—from a panic terror such as the worst of scoundrels might feel at sight of a policeman; an agony caused sorely by the doubt as to Madame de Marville's probable reception of him." At some carelessly brutal remark from the same cousin, "Pons flushed red, like a girl found in a fault. The grain of sand was a little too large; for some moments he could only let it work in his heart."

Here is the perfection of the sensitive-humble type; we need seek no better illustration than this shrinking, palpitating, self-distrusting old soul, so exquisitely depicted by the hand of him who has been successful above all others, in the delineation of elderly men.

Père Goriot, another of Balzac's characters, is very similar to Cousin Pons. He is retiring, self-sacrificing, delicately impressionable, a victim of his own generosity and the selfishness of others. Neglected and ill-treated by his daughters, to

whom he has given all, he represents in his lonely and pitiable death the tragedy of the sensitive-humble character in an unregardful world.

Brutus<sup>1</sup> is an excellent example of the sensitive-contemplative character, though perhaps not so striking as the much-discussed and never perfectly analyzed Hamlet. Brutus is always the thinker, the man of speculative imagination; yet his thoughts and imaginings are always tinged with feeling—with sincere affection for his relatives and friends, with kindness for servants and attendants, with passion of noble action or fervor of patriotism. He does nothing in the rashness of personal enmity, nor is he moved to outbursts of wrath and spleen, as Cassius is. He ponders all his deeds, weighs every consequence, and considers every possibility. When he acts, it is only after long inward discussion and the wearisome comparison of right and wrong. He never strikes out boldly, as the man of action does; nor, on the other hand, does he shrink from a strenuous duty, as the mere emotional weakling is prone to do. Though moved by strong emotional impulses, he debates long within himself, as to a proper course of action and having decided what is right, holds rigidly to it, to the end.

The Buddha of Edwin Arnold's "Light of Asia" is a most satisfying example of the sensitive-contemplative type. Gentle, affectionate, full of love and ardor for his family and friends, he yet withdraws from the world into a life of meditation,

"Seeking, night and day,  
\* \* \* that light which somewhere shines,  
To lighten all men's darkness, if they knew :"

Lost in contemplation he passes to vision after vision of

"Life's upward steps, long linked  
To higher slopes and higher,"

The man rapt in his holy thoughts becomes at last the mystic and the seer.

Other illustrations of the type may be found in literature of greater or lesser worth. Hamlet has already been mentioned. Job never ceases to fascinate, with his long and well-nigh unendurable afflictions, his restless searching after truth, his wistful, half-skeptical questioning, "If a man die shall he live again?" Christian in the "Pilgrim's Progress" is a sensitive contemplative; so is Silas Marner in George Eliot's great novel; and in the same list with these we shall be justified in putting Dr. Primrose,<sup>2</sup> Robert Elsmere,<sup>3</sup> Dr. Lavendar,<sup>4</sup> and John Ward, Preacher.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Julius Cæsar: Shakespeare.

<sup>2</sup>The Vicar of Wakefield: Goldsmith. <sup>3</sup>Robert Elsmere: Mrs. Humphrey Ward. <sup>4</sup>Old Chester Tales, Dr. Lavendar's People: Margaret Deland. <sup>5</sup>John Ward, Preacher: Margaret Deland.



The sensitive-emotional temperament finds a fitting embodiment in the Werther of Goethe.<sup>1</sup> Werther is above all things the man of feeling. He seems almost incapable of action, so much are his mental powers concentrated on his own states of emotion. He appears to be endowed with talents, particularly the artistic, of which, in his letters, he occasionally speaks. Even before he is permitted that first fatal view of Charlotte cutting bread and butter for her flock of brothers and sisters, he is seen to be highly emotional, and imaginative to an extreme degree. He confesses that he has ever been the subject of sudden transitions from sorrow to immoderate joy, and from sweet melancholy to violent passions. After he becomes possessed by that unhappy affection which works his utter undoing, we behold him with eyes in a fine frenzy rolling, carried away by the violence of his love.

On one occasion, he tells us, overcome by a force of a purely imaginary circumstance, he buries his face in his handkerchief, and hastens from the room.

"If Charlotte," he says, "does not allow me to enjoy the melancholy consolation of bathing her hands in my tears, I feel compelled to tear myself from her. Then I either wander through the country, climb some precipitous cliff, or force a path through the trackless thicket, where I am lacerated and torn by briars, and thence find relief."

Again, in writing to his friend Wilhelm: "O, why cannot I fall on your neck, and with floods of tears and raptures give utterance to all the passions that distract my heart?" He relates an instance in which Charlotte figures: "I threw myself at her feet, and seizing her hand, bedewed it with a thousand tears." He becomes a pessimist, as those who feel deeply must inevitably do. "What is the destiny of man," he questions, "but to fill up the measure of his sufferings, and to drink his allotted cup of bitterness?" Yet he of all the world appears to himself the most miserable. "Have men before me ever been so wretched?" he exclaims. And so on, through fits and gusts of passion, wails and ravings of despair, we follow him to the end, when he takes his wretched life with the pistols which his last letter tells us he has kissed a thousand times, because the white hand of Charlotte has but touched them.

It is said that Werther has been responsible for many suicides in addition to his own. This is easy to believe. In the sentimental age in which the book was written, there may, indeed, have been many who, impressed by the fervor and eloquence of the passionate young artist, were persuaded that they, too, had griefs too bitter to be borne. But in this matter-

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<sup>1</sup>The Sorrows of Werther : Goethe.

of-fact age there are few who can read "The Sorrows of Werther" without a certain impatience, even mirth. He is the emotional hero *par excellence*, but the time has gone by when such heroes can make their appeal.

Of the sensitive type but more attractive and lifelike is Lucy Snow, in Charlotte Brontë's delightful novel, "Villette." Lucy is frankly emotional, yet full of intelligence, and, usually, of self-control. She has little impulse to action, and never takes an initiative unless forced by necessity to do so; she rather remains passive, feeling intensely, yet doing nothing, until a desperate situation of some sort compels her to take a new course. She suffers much, not particularly from ill treatment, or even unkindness, of which she has an undue share, but from the sensitiveness of her own soul, which torments itself with questions, reproaches, vague imaginings, and passionate desires. To the looker-on, a small, plain, quiet English teacher in a busy and pretentious Belgian *pensionnat*, she is in reality the central figure in a long series of emotional dramas—all enacted within the chambers of her own brain. She has a highly wrought, keenly susceptible nature, yet, lacking neither spirit nor humor, she never seems exaggerated nor artificial. She is, indeed, one of the most natural, as well as one of the most skillfully analyzed emotional figures in all modern literature.

Jane Eyre<sup>1</sup> is much like Lucy Snow, though perhaps somewhat more intense. There is a long list of sensitive-emotionals in fiction and the drama. Corinne<sup>2</sup> is noteworthy; so is Clarissa Harlowe<sup>3</sup>—a figure of almost pure emotion. Juliet<sup>4</sup> is all ardor and sensibility—a most fitting companion for the youthful Romeo; Ophelia,<sup>5</sup> Desdemona,<sup>6</sup> Miranda<sup>7</sup> and Viola,<sup>8</sup> not to mention others of Shakespeare's women, may well be said to come within the catalogue of emotional. Cyrano de Bergerac,<sup>9</sup> Heathcliff,<sup>10</sup> Rochester,<sup>11</sup> Arthur Dimmesdale,<sup>12</sup> Claude Melnotte,<sup>13</sup> though it may sound incongruous to group them together, are sensitive-emotional men. Nydia,<sup>14</sup> Evelina,<sup>15</sup> Pamela,<sup>16</sup> Tess of the D'Urbervilles,<sup>17</sup> Jeanie Deans,<sup>18</sup> Hester Prynne,<sup>19</sup> Lindel of the "African Farm,"<sup>20</sup> and the emotional heroines of the so-called "love stories" are of this

<sup>1</sup> Jane Eyre: C. Brontë. <sup>2</sup> Corinne: Mme. de Staël. <sup>3</sup> Clarissa Harlowe: Richardson. <sup>4</sup> Romeo and Juliet: Shakespeare. <sup>5</sup> Hamlet: Shakespeare. <sup>6</sup> Othello: Shakespeare. <sup>7</sup> The Tempest: Shakespeare. <sup>8</sup> Twelfth Night: Shakespeare. <sup>9</sup> Cyrano de Bergerac: Rostand. <sup>10</sup> Wuthering Heights: Emily Brontë. <sup>11</sup> Jane Eyre: C. Brontë. <sup>12</sup> The Scarlet Letter: Hawthorne. <sup>13</sup> The Lady of Lyons: Bulwer-Lytton. <sup>14</sup> The Last Days of Pompeii: Bulwer-Lytton. <sup>15</sup> Evelina: Miss Burney. <sup>16</sup> Pamela: Richardson. <sup>17</sup> Tess of the D'Urbervilles: Thomas Hardy. <sup>18</sup> The Heart of Midlothian: Scott. <sup>19</sup> The Scarlet Letter: Hawthorne. <sup>20</sup> The Story of an African Farm: Olive Schreiner.

type, as well as many in books of higher excellence. It may truly be said that the common feminine type in literature is the sensitive-emotional as the common masculine type is the active.

## V

### THE APATHETIC, THE AMORPHOUS, AND THE UNSTABLE

Of the really apathetic character we see but little in literature, chiefly, perhaps, because it does not make interesting reading. It is apparent, nevertheless, in a few well-marked cases. One of the most typical of these is Minoret-Levrault in Balzac's "Ursule Mirouet." He is a heavy, repulsive person, lacking in both activity and emotion. His wife, Zèlie (an apathetic-active, it would seem), completely dominates him, scheming and plotting for the advancement of the family, and managing everything according to her own very narrow and very selfish ideas.

"Wherever form rules," says the author, "sentiment disappears. The postmaster, a living proof of that axiom, presented a physiognomy in which an observer could with difficulty trace beneath the vivid carnation of its coarsely developed flesh, the semblance of a soul, . . . Though . . . quite incapable of reflection, the man had never done anything that justified the sinister suggestions of his bodily presence. To all who felt afraid of him, his postilions would say, 'Oh, he's not bad.' He seldom spoke. . . . If he had been a talker you would have felt that he was out of keeping with himself. Reflecting that this elephant minus a trumpet, and without a mind was called Minoret-Levrault, we are compelled to agree with Sterne as to the occult power of names, which sometimes ridicule, and sometimes foretell character."

It is needless to say that the sluggish and unprepossessing postmaster is not the most interesting character in the book.

On the whole, the pure-apatetic type must of necessity carry with it a suggestion of stupidity. There is something abnormal, also, about it, for it is the nature of the normal man either to feel or do—or to both feel and do. Usually, in literature, the apathetic person has some moving impulse within him, which puts him into the list of apathetic-actives, or that of partial characters. Bovary, for instance, in Flaubert's great novel, "Madame Bovary," would be set down as an apathetic were it not that his simple, but deep and intense love for the unworthy woman he has married gives him a claim to a somewhat higher place. Dunstan Cass, in George Eliot's "Silas Marner," is of an apathetic temperament, yet once or twice he acts with vigor and decision. Dombey, in Dickens's "Dombey and Son," approaches the apathetic, but exhibits on certain

occasions an ability to feel and do that makes us hesitate in our classification of him. The apathetic temperament in the normal man is, it would seem, best distinguished in combination with elements of a distinctly different sort.

The amorphous characters approach the sensitive-emotional on the one hand and the apathetic on the other; ordinarily there may be some difficulty in distinguishing them. A notable example is, however, ready at hand, which represents rather clearly what Ribot means when he says of the amorphous, "Some other person, or failing that, the social environment, wills for them, and acts through them. They are not voices, but echoes." This character is seen in Gertrude, Queen of Denmark, the mother of Hamlet. Her first utterance in Shakespeare's play is a commonplace, a cheap platitude, acceptable only to shallow minds:

"Do not forever with thy vailèd lids  
Seek for thy noble father in the dust;  
Thou knowst 'tis common; all that lives must die,  
Passing through nature to eternity."

"Ay, Madam, it is common," answers Hamlet, sensible for the moment that to try to explain real and lasting grief to a nature like the queen's is a useless and thankless task.

"If it be," continues his mother, "why seems it so particular with thee?"

Hamlet's patience gives way. Here is a woman whose husband is less than two months dead, who is able to console herself, and now attempts to console him with a meaningless formula caught from other lips, perhaps those of the "borrowed majesty of Denmark." The young man bursts forth into passionate reproach:

"Seems, Madam! nay it *is*! I know not seems!"

But the truth and eloquence of his speech are lost upon the shallow queen. The remainder of the play goes to show her almost utter lack of individuality. When Hamlet, in the closet scene, attempts to show her the heartlessness and iniquity of her conduct, she seems at first unable to comprehend his point of view, but soon, with characteristic adaptability, acquiesces completely in what he says, suiting her attitude to his words, and promising anything he asks. No sooner, however, is she out of the circle of his influence than she is again the easy tool of the king, and the reflection of the conventionality and corruption of the court.

She is not the apathetic type, for she has feelings, such as they are, of a rather fleeting nature; she seems to care sincerely for Hamlet, and shows real affection for Ophelia. She is not the unstable, exactly, for she is not within herself changeable or capricious; she is altered by the influence of others, of

more powerful personality than herself. She is not the sensitive-emotional, because her feelings are never deep enough nor strong enough. There seems no doubt as to the justice of classifying her as almost purely amorphous.

The following characters may be classed as amorphous though some of them, it must be confessed, might as reasonably be called partial characters: Genevra Fanshawe,<sup>1</sup> Amelia Sedley,<sup>2</sup> Cosette,<sup>3</sup> Marius,<sup>4</sup> Ursule Mirouet,<sup>5</sup> Stephen Guest,<sup>6</sup> Agnes Wickfield,<sup>7</sup> Hetty Sorrel,<sup>8</sup> Lucie Manette,<sup>9</sup> Lucy Deane.<sup>10</sup>

Capriciousness, uncertainty, lack of poise are characteristic of the unstables. There is no predicting what they will do. They surprise us with sudden changes—unexpected outbursts of malice, kindness, devotion or self-sacrifice. They add an element of speculation to a story in the very fact that we cannot depend upon them from one moment to another. Nevertheless, they are often irritating because they allow us no settled attitude or verified opinion regarding them. The unstable character as a hero is likely to prove a very unsatisfactory being. Of the truth of this statement we need no further evidence than Mr. Barrie's "Sentimental Tommy," with its tantalizing and disagreeable sequel, "Tommy and Grizel." As a child, Tommy is undeniably attractive, as we expect but little of an infant, or even of a half-grown boy, in the way of stability and unity of character. But as a man, he is not much less than repellant. His explosive, fickle, unreliable character makes him almost as intolerable in fiction as a person of his nature would be in an actual social circle. More successful, because not so completely variable is the character of Sidney Carton, in Dickens's "Tale of Two Cities." His one supreme act of renunciation, surrounded as it is by the pathos of unrequited love, wins for Carton our sympathy and lasting approbation, setting him somewhat above the fairly conventional hero, Evremond. Steerforth, in "David Copperfield," is of an unstable temperament. So, most decidedly, is Peer Gynt, in Ibsen's drama of that name. Godfrey Cass<sup>11</sup> and Arthur Donnithorne<sup>12</sup> are examples among George Eliot's characters. King Lear, though one of Shakespeare's greatest creations, is, nevertheless, of the unstable type. "He hath ever but slenderly known himself," says his daughter, with her cool, unlenient judgment. "The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash." The inconstant character in fiction as in real life, encounters everywhere sorrow and disaster. His condemnation is that of

<sup>1</sup>Villette: C. Brontë. <sup>2</sup>Vanity Fair: Thackeray. <sup>3</sup>- <sup>4</sup>Les Misérables: Hugo. <sup>5</sup>Ursule Mirouet: Balzac. <sup>6</sup>The Mill on the Floss: G. Eliot. <sup>7</sup>David Copperfield: Dickens. <sup>8</sup>Adam Bede: G. Eliot. <sup>9</sup>A Tale of Two Cities: Dickens. <sup>10</sup>The Mill on the Floss: G. Eliot.

<sup>11</sup>Silas Marner: G. Eliot. <sup>12</sup>Adam Bede: G. Eliot.

Reuben,<sup>1</sup> who heard among the lofty phases of his father's blessing, the sad, inevitable words, "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel."

## VI

### COMPOSITE CHARACTERS

The apathetic-actives are closely allied to the apathetic-intellectuals, and it is difficult to make any clear distinction between them. The intellectuals, however, seem to lack a certain spontaneity, or inner source of action, which the apathetic-actives possess. The chief difference between these active temperaments and the ordinary active, is that the former have less than the ordinary amount of feeling. They are "cold-blooded" as we say. They have one strong passion, as selfishness, or religious fanaticism, but, otherwise, are not responsive to emotional appeals. There is no kindness, tenderness, nor pity in them; they are unable to put themselves, mentally, in the place of another who is experiencing joy or pain. They make others suffer, even administer torture, without any qualms, either æsthetic or conscientious. An illustration of this temperament appears in the Richelieu of De Vigny's "Cinq-Mars" and Bulwer-Lytton's "Richelieu." He is cold, calculating, impervious to any appeal which touches the usual man. He possesses a brilliant intellect, which he uses to promote his own cruel and fanatic purposes. He allows nothing to interfere with his own designs, but sacrifices the young, the promising, the innocent,—any one whom he deems capable of putting a stone in his way. We recoil in horror from such a soul. It seems, and justly, to be nothing less than hideous, not entirely human but fiendish.

Much the same character is shown in Iago, in Shakespeare's play "Othello." He seems devoid of feeling, except for a certain tinge of ambition and jealousy. He is cold-blooded, conscienceless, but indefatigable in his labor to prosper his evil cause—in short, he is an apathetic-active.

Others who partially or completely possess this unenviable temperament are Richard III,<sup>2</sup> Goneril and Regan,<sup>3</sup> Becky Sharp,<sup>4</sup> Tito Melema,<sup>5</sup> Madame LaFarge,<sup>6</sup> Madame Thenardier,<sup>7</sup> Roger Chillingworth,<sup>8</sup> Javert,<sup>9</sup> and Fagin.<sup>10</sup> Certainly a much longer list might be made. In many, a close inspection would reveal a near approach to the morbid and unnatural;

<sup>1</sup>Genesis, 49, 4.

<sup>2</sup>Richard III: Shakespeare. <sup>3</sup>King Lear: Shakespeare. <sup>4</sup>Vanity Fair: Thackeray. <sup>5</sup>Romola: G. Eliot. <sup>6</sup>A Tale of Two Cities: Dickens. <sup>7</sup>Les Misérables: Hugo. <sup>8</sup>The Scarlet Letter: Hawthorne. <sup>9</sup>Les Misérables: Hugo. <sup>10</sup>Oliver Twist: Dickens.

many at the best would have to be set down as partial characters.

By far the most usual, as well as the most interesting character-combination in literature is the sensitive-active. So large a representation has this temperament that one must select merely at random.

Anna Karénina in Tolstoi's novel which is named for her, is not less interesting than others of her kind. The emotional heroine of an emotional novel, she, nevertheless, impresses one as a strong, vital, active character. Our first glimpse of her convinces us of her "dignified vivacity," as the author puts it. "There seemed to be in her person," he goes on, "such a superfluity of life that in spite of her will, it expressed itself now in the lightning of her eyes, now in her smile." We feel her energy and capability at once, in the way in which she adjusts the domestic difficulties of her brother, Stepan Oblonsky, and his wife. Everything that she does bears the impress of a vigorous and unwearying nature. She delights in action as a thoroughbred race-horse delights in it. Yet she is full of emotional ardor and sensibility which suffuse her action, and give her the most undeniable womanly charm. The less sensitive, the happier she might have been—the more contented with her unromantic husband, and less susceptible to the charms of the distinguished Vronsky. She suffers agonies of jealousy, of affection, remorse, and despair. She finds her life as she has made it for herself, unendurable; but even in seeking death, she is actuated, not so much by her wild yearning for relief from pain as by the logical conviction that no other course is open, and by a sort of desperate courage concentrating in one strong and decisive moment the tempestuous vigor and passion of her life.

As has been suggested, there are many sensitive-actives. An extra dash of sensitiveness, if the character is a woman, a trifle more of activity, if the character is a man, will produce the proportion which impresses most of us as fitting, proper and true to life. The struggles and unhappiness of Maggie Tulliver<sup>1</sup> draw largely upon our sympathy, for she seems to us a real person, burdened with actual griefs, and performing actual deeds. Katusha in Tolstoi's tremendous book "Resurrection" holds us in a still stronger way. Lady Macbeth,<sup>2</sup> Antigone,<sup>3</sup> Alcestis,<sup>4</sup> are characters capable of deep feeling and great action. Œdipus,<sup>5</sup> Savonarola,<sup>6</sup> Macbeth,<sup>7</sup> are exalted names of men who could both feel and do. The list is long:

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<sup>1</sup>The Mill on the Floss: G. Eliot. <sup>2</sup>Macbeth: Shakespeare. <sup>3</sup>Antigone: Sophocles. <sup>4</sup>Alcestis: Euripides. <sup>5</sup>Œdipus Rex: Œdipus at Colonus: Sophocles. <sup>6</sup>Romola: G. Eliot. <sup>7</sup>Macbeth: Shakespeare.

Lorna Doone,<sup>1</sup> Robert Falconer,<sup>2</sup> Richard Feveril,<sup>3</sup> Jean Valjean,<sup>4</sup> Romola,<sup>5</sup> Rebecca,<sup>6</sup> Ramona,<sup>7</sup> M. Paul Emanuel,<sup>8</sup> David Copperfield,<sup>9</sup> Edgar,<sup>10</sup> Rosalind,<sup>11</sup> Dinah Morris<sup>12</sup>—and many others whose names it would take long to set down. Some of these approach the balanced temperament, others are more purely emotional, yet all are undoubtedly sensitive-actives.

Of the existence of the balanced character, Ribot confesses himself uncertain. He suggests that if there is a person in whom feeling, thought, and action are nearly or quite equal, this condition would result in suppression of character, *i. e.*, of any marks of individuality. It is difficult to admit that such need be the case. It would seem that character *per se* must still continue; for is it, as Malapert suggests, anything more than the "moral physiognomy" of a given human being?

Whether or not persons of the balanced character exist in real life, there are plenty of them to be found in books. The one that most readily occurs to us is Sir Charles Grandison in Richardson's famous volumes of that name. The preface written by the author sets forth quite clearly his own modest intention, and the prospective character of his hero.

He "now presents (he says) in Sir Charles Grandison, the example of a man acting uniformly well through a variety of trying scenes, because all his actions are regulated by one steady principle. A man of religion and virtue, of liveliness and spirit, accomplished and agreeable, happy in himself and a blessing to others." Mark the perfect man!

From the outset, what may we expect of such a hero but the most irreproachable manners, the most impeccable virtue, the highest, the most unassailable honor—and in general, the most correct and tiresome behavior? These indeed, are exactly what we find, Sir Charles is so flawless, so "icily regular" so "splendidly null" that the first three volumes would seem sufficient to establish his claims to canonization, without the need of the other three or four. It takes him a long time, however, to condescend to bestow his evenly pulsing heart upon the most angelic, yet palpably unworthy, Miss Harriet Byron. In the meantime this periwigged, lace-trimmed, silk-stockinged paragon conducts himself in a manner quite in accordance with the author's preface. On one of the early pages of the book, he coolly disposes (for the time, at least) of the

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<sup>1</sup>Lorna Doone: Blackmore. <sup>2</sup>Robert Falconer: G. Macdonald. <sup>3</sup>The Ordeal of Richard Feveril: G. Meredith. <sup>4</sup>Les Misérables: Hugo. <sup>5</sup>Romola: G. Eliot. <sup>6</sup>Ivanhoe: Scott. <sup>7</sup>Ramona: Jackson. <sup>8</sup>Villette: C. Brontë. <sup>9</sup>David Copperfield: Dickens. <sup>10</sup>King Lear: Shakespeare. <sup>11</sup>As You Like It: Shakespeare. <sup>12</sup>Adam Bede: G. Eliot.



arrant villian, Sir Hargrave Polfexen, who is summarily abducting the heroine with a view to forcing her into marriage. Sir Charles, without descending from his customary dignity, stops the horses, vanquishes the villain, and rescues the lady. This he does with a delicious nonchalance. "I had not drawn my sword," he remarks, in relating this little adventure to an adoring circle of femininity; "I hope I shall never be provoked to do it in a private quarrel. I should not, however, have scrupled to draw it on such an occasion as this, had there been absolute necessity for it.—Vice is the greatest coward in the world when it knows it will be resolutely opposed; and what have good men engaged in a right cause to fear?"

No wonder, after such an account and such a homily that the listeners exclaim with unreserved amazement, "What an admirable man is Sir Charles Grandison—thus thinking, thus acting!" But why follow him through the remainder of this long apotheosis? We should seek in vain if we expected aught of him but the most consistent and thoroughgoing perfection. It is needless to say that we should conclude him to be (long before we reached the last page) the most unmitigated prig.

Although he would not scruple to draw his sword when there was absolute necessity for it, he differs from the man of action in his very conscientious hesitancy; he differs from the emotional man, in his complete and natural control over his feelings, of which the author constantly assures us he has an abundant supply. In short, his faculties are so nicely adjusted that he can be called nothing else than the balanced character of which Ribot is so doubtful, and which in its masculine form, at least, we seldom or never, meet in real life.

Daniel Deronda<sup>1</sup> and John Halifax<sup>2</sup> may perhaps be intended for balanced characters, but neither of them is particularly attractive. Adam Bede<sup>3</sup> might come under this head also, but he has a certain unpretentious solidity about him which prevents our becoming impatient with him.

Portia<sup>4</sup> is one of the most perfectly balanced feminine characters in literature yet she does not appear tiresome nor impossible as Grandison and Deronda do. Perhaps this is because it does not seem unnatural for a woman to be perfect! Adapting Richardson's description of Sir Charles, we find it fairly applies to Portia: "A woman of religion and virtue; of liveliness and spirit; accomplished and agreeable; happy in herself and a blessing to others."

Lack of space forbids the discussion of the partial characters

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1 Daniel Deronda: G. Eliot. 2 John Halifax, Gentleman: D. M. Craik. 3 Adam Bede: G. Eliot. 4 The Merchant of Venice, Shakespeare.

of literature. Many that might be so named would, also, it is safe to say, go as easily into one of the groups of composite characters, according to the predominating element which exhibited itself. A considerable difference of opinion might well be aroused as to the final classification of such partial or composite characters as George Meredith's "Egoist,"<sup>1</sup> or Ibsen's Rebecca West,<sup>2</sup> though such a division of opinion would be neither unnatural nor uninformative.

As to the abnormal characters in literature, like Falstaff,<sup>3</sup> Don Quixote,<sup>4</sup> Quilp,<sup>5</sup> and others, a volume might be written. Indeed, the task of "pigeon-holing" according to temperaments even the more famous personages in literature becomes upon contemplation, a task so large as to seem little short of presumptuous. The present paper can claim to be nothing more than tentative and suggestive. Much remains to be done, which only the widest possible knowledge of literature and psychology could hope to render at all complete.

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<sup>1</sup>The Egoist: G. Meredith. <sup>2</sup>Rosmersholm: Ibsen. <sup>3</sup>King Henry IV; The Merry Wives of Windsor: Shakespeare. <sup>4</sup>Don Quixote: Cervantes. <sup>5</sup>Old Curiosity Shop: Dickens.